

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 87

By DeBerry L

A RESOLUTION to honor and congratulate Pastor Lee Ward of Memphis upon his receipt of the Congressional Gold Medal for his patriotic service as a Montford Point Marine.

WHEREAS, this nation is fortunate to have so many sons and daughters who have sacrificed their personal concerns, and oftentimes their lives, to defend the American way of life and the most inviolate precepts of democracy; and

WHEREAS, among these valiant citizens there are those whose place in history has previously gone unheralded, but who are now being given the recognition they so richly deserve; and

WHEREAS, one such outstanding citizen who has proven his commitment to his country through faithful service in the United States Marine Corps is Mr. Lee Ward, now Pastor of Greater Harvest Church of God in Christ Ministries, Inc. in Memphis; and

WHEREAS, a member of this nation's greatest generation, Pastor Ward was a twenty-one-year-old soldier who, in April 1943, was one of 20,000 African-Americans who comprised the historic unit known as the Montford Point Marines, the first African-Americans to serve as Marines since the Revolutionary War; and

WHEREAS, Montford Point, the training camp for African-American Marines that was adjacent to the Marine base now known as Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, was deactivated in 1949 when President Harry S Truman issued an executive order ending segregation of the armed forces; and

WHEREAS, the Montford Point Marines endured overt racism and many other hardships during their heroic service to America in World War II; in addition to being allocated inferior

accommodations and facilities, these African-American Marines suffered the indignities of Jim Crow laws in the South before going on to fight, and sometimes die, in the Pacific theater; and

WHEREAS, over sixty years later, on June 27, 2012, Pastor Ward traveled to Washington D.C., where in Emancipation Hall he and 361 other surviving members of this seminal unit received this nation's highest civilian honor, the Congressional Gold Medal; and

WHEREAS, Pastor Lee Ward helped pave the way for equality for African-Americans and indeed all races and genders during his twenty-five-year career in the Marines, which spanned World War II, Korea, and Vietnam; and

WHEREAS, during his final nine years as a Marine, Pastor Ward served astutely as personal security for three commandants; and

WHEREAS, after retiring from the Marine Corps, Lee Ward moved to Memphis, where he became the assistant pastor of Greater Harvest Church of God in Christ in 1969; and

WHEREAS, in 1973, Pastor Ward began his exemplary tenure as the head pastor at Greater Harvest and, nearly forty years later, he is still tenderly caring for his flock with love and compassion and preaching inspirational sermons; and

WHEREAS, Pastor Ward takes great personal satisfaction in finally being appropriately recognized as a Marine, and he shares this august honor with his wife, Julia, and their five children; and

WHEREAS, Lee Ward proudly and bravely served his country during its time of greatest need in World War II, and he should be specially recognized for his manifold achievements as a Marine, minister, and citizen; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED EIGHTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE CONCURRING, that we honor and congratulate Pastor Lee Ward on the occasion of his receipt of the Congressional Gold Medal, this nation's highest civilian honor.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we thank Pastor Ward for his historic and heroic service as a Montford Point Marine, commend his ongoing commitment to God and His congregation at Greater Harvest, and wish him all the best in his future endeavors.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.